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# The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education

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## Feature

### The history, content and evolution of *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*

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#### Abstract

*The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education (Int J FYHE) began in 2010 with a specific FYHE focus and has published two issues per year with one issue linked to The International First Year in Higher Education Conference (FYHE Conference). This issue—Volume 6, Issue 1—is the last under this title. In 2015 the Journal will align to a new conference that has a broader focus on Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS). At this significant point and before we move on to the new journal, the journal team felt it was appropriate that the Feature in this final issue of the Int J FYHE should summarise the Journal's activity over the years from 2010 to 2014.*

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## Introduction

Since 2010, *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* (Int J FYHE) has published two issues per year with one of the issues consisting of the best submissions from the associated conference, *The International First Year in Higher Education Conference* (FYHE Conference). Volume 6, Issue 1—this issue—is the last with a specific FYHE focus and the last with the title of *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*. 2015 marks the beginning of a new international conference with a broader focus on Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS). And just as the FYHE-focussed International Journal and Conference were symbiotic, the STARS conference is to have a similar relationship with a newly branded journal that will broaden its scope to include the student learning journey in all its forms. Sally Kift, the inaugural FYHE Fellow and one of a select few who have been associated with the FYHE Conference and Journal from their beginning, summarises this evolution:

*Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention & Success ... is the next and logical frontier for our student-focused passion. First year should start with the end in clear student sight. Students make individual and multiple transitions over the course of their student lifecycles and learning journeys in, through and out of higher education, between sectors and via diverse pathways. Increasingly, transition pedagogy is paving the way for intentionally designed capstone*

*experiences while our Australian colleagues are now researching the second year slump. I look forward to sharing this next exciting phase of our own learning journey with you in the continuing pursuit of enhanced student learning, success and retention.*

(Kift, 2015, para. 2)

At this significant point in the evolution of the reporting of “our student-focussed passion,” and before we move on to the new journal, it would seem appropriate that the *Feature* in this final issue of the Int J FYHE should summarise the journal’s activity over the years from 2010 to 2014

## Overview

The Int J FYHE is an online, open access, peer-reviewed journal that seeks to publish research focused on scholarship and good practice dedicated to enhancing the experience of commencing students. The Journal’s audiences are primarily academic and professional staff involved in first year and transition programs as well as senior managers with responsibility for first year policies and strategies.

The Journal was first published in July 2010 on a bi-annual basis with one issue linked to the annual FYHE Conference. Three types of submissions are accepted by the Journal: scholarly papers, practice-based innovations and a *Features* segment which has included invited papers and interviews with key scholars and practitioners.

## The publishing journey

### *In the beginning*

The Int J FYHE emerged out of the “exponential growth in activity and interest [in FYE research and practice in Australasia]” (Nelson, Clarke, Kift & Creagh,

2012, p. v) and the concomitant interest in and success of the annual FYHE Conference (known as the *Pacific Rim FYHE Conference* up until 2012). The Journal was created as an adjunct to the Conference so that good practice across the sector could continue to be shared and the dynamic and robust discussions about student transition and engagement that occurred at the annual conference had a forum outside of the Conference.

### *Look and feel*

The Journal is published using *Open Journal Systems* (OJS). OJS is a journal management and publishing system developed by the Public Knowledge Project and as open source software is made available to journals for the purpose of making open access publishing a viable publishing option (see <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/>).

In 2013, a new version of OJS (2.3) was installed which slightly changed the custom interface of the Journal. Readers can now preview an article in a reading pane prior to download (now standard in most publishing software). The new version allows for more defined plug-ins including the ability to embed twitter buttons and other social media tools on each individual manuscript.

The Journal retains on the website a distinct banner/image that is changed with each new Volume. From the outset, the banner has attempted to articulate the nature of the publication but since 2013 has based the images on the location of the annual International FYHE Conference. Figure 1 profiles recent Int J FYHE banners.



**Figure 1: Int J FYHE Volume banners**

## People

### *The Editorial Team and Advisory Board*

The *Int JFYHE* has benefitted from an outstanding Editorial Team: Karen Nelson, Editor-in-Chief, John Clarke, Editor and *Features* Coordinator, Rachael Field, Practice Report Editor and Sally Kift, Editor. The Journal has also been fortunate to have an Advisory Board made up of eight leading international scholars from the tertiary education sector:

- Tom Angelo, Queens University of Charlotte, United States
- Marcia Devlin, Federation University Australia, Australia
- Kerri-Lee Krause, Victoria University, Australia
- Steve Larkin, Charles Darwin University, Australia
- Ruth Pickford, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom
- Lorraine Stefani, University of Auckland, New Zealand
- Vincent Tinto, Syracuse University, United States
- Mantz Yorke, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

### *People as registrants*

Journal registration incurs no cost and all manuscripts are free to download. The number of individuals registered as either a reader, author or reviewer (or all) has increased each year. Authors can view the progress of their submission and subscription to the website means that all registered users receive updates of new issues as they become available.

The Journal also emails those who register for the FYHE Conference list to notify of new issues as well as call for submissions for the next issue.

### *People as authors*

While authorship has been international, the overwhelming number of published articles are from Australian authors (76%).

Country of origin	Total Articles and Practice Reports	
	submitted	accepted
Australia	132	71
New Zealand	18	13
United States	6	3
United Kingdom	4	3
Malaysia	3	0
South Africa	2	2
Turkey	2	0
Pakistan	2	0
Canada	1	1
Hong Kong	1	0
Bangladesh	1	0
Ireland	1	0
Total	173	93

**Table 1: Authorship origins**

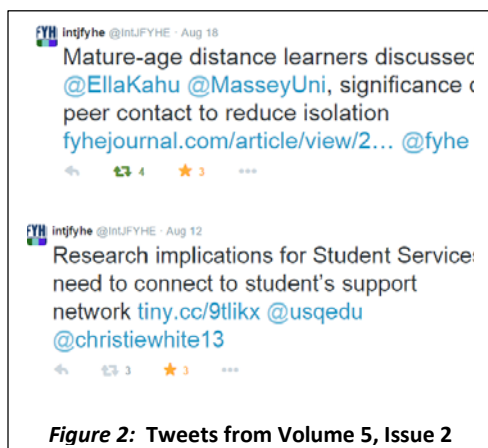
Table 1 summarises the authorship origins using the country of origin of the first author.

## Processes

### *The issue of "Issues"*

Since first publication in July 2010, the Journal has published nine issues which have included 50 articles and 43 Practice Reports. Each issue has a dedicated *Feature* - five interviews, two invited papers and two invited conference keynote papers. The Journal has consistently met publication schedules and regularly publishes February/March and July/August. Issue 2 of each Volume (plus the inaugural Volume 1, Issue 1) consists of papers selected from the annual International FYHE Conference. As of March 2015, the Journal has had **212,661** abstract views and **95,466** full PDF downloads since its first publication. In nearly 80% of the issues (seven of the nine), the most viewed and/or downloaded submission is the issue's *Feature*. The most downloaded article since the inaugural issue is the very first *Feature*:

Kift, S., Nelson, K. & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition Pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE – A case study of policy and practice for the higher education



**Figure 2: Tweets from Volume 5, Issue 2**

sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-20.

## *Editorial policies and procedures*

Copyright for articles published in the *Int J FYHE* is retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the Journal.

Articles in the *Int J FYHE* are published under the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY). This is to help provide legal certainty about what readers can do with published articles, and achieves wider dissemination and archiving, which in turn makes publishing with this journal more valuable to authors.

Since 2013, the *Int J FYHE* has aligned with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) best practice guidelines for dealing with ethical issues in journal publishing and has adopted the COPE guidelines which the Journal members (Advisory Board, Editors and the Journal Manager) have agreed meet the purposes and objectives of the Journal.

A summary of the basic principles and good practice guidelines for peer reviewers, authors and editors are provided on the website

<https://fyhejournal.com/about/editorialPolicies#custom-0>

## *Dissemination via Twitter*

Since 2013, the social media tool *Twitter* has been used to increase the dissemination of individual submissions and promote the Journal's profile more broadly. *Twitter* is used primarily to call for submissions, announce new issues and in the weeks following the release of an issue, one to two tweets are sent per day to disseminate individual submissions. To increase the profile of each tweet, the authors'

institutional twitter details are included and where possible, an author's twitter account. Figure 2 illustrates a number of tweets from Volume 5, Issue 2.

(50 Articles and 43 Practice Reports) is shown in Table 2. There were 239 keywords but these have been synthesised down into 71 unique keywords. The data in Table 2 indicates that:

**Table 2: Summary of key metadata concepts**

<b>Academic discipline/sub-disciplines</b>	Cross-disciplinary	44/93 (47%)
	Health Education	14/93 (15%)
	Legal Education	6/93 (6%)
	Arts Education – Media & Communications	6/93(6%)
<b>Design (method or approach)</b>	Case Study	39/93 (42%)
	Mixed Method	30/93 (32%)
	Survey	6/93 (6%)
	Conceptual/Theoretical	3/93 (3%)
<b>Keywords</b>	First year experience	29 (mentions)
	Transition	15
	Engagement	14
	Academic literacy	13

*Twitter* has had some impact and, so far, monitoring indicates the tool is of benefit. However, data on the long term impact is not yet available. The option of adding a new field in the submission metadata to include a *Twitter* username is being explored.

## The content

### *Some key metadata concepts*

A quantitative summary of key metadata concepts from the 93 accepted manuscripts

- close to half of the manuscripts had a cross-disciplinary focus (44/93; 47%);
- case study was the most common research method (39/93; 42%) followed by the Mixed Method (30/93; 32%) approach; and
- of the 71 unique keywords collated from the metadata, those most used were “first year experience”, “transition” and “engagement”.

These findings could be regarded as a positive insight into not only what authors are focussing on but also what the journal editors are encouraging. The significant cross-disciplinary emphasis is consistent with the theoretical and operational institution-wide focus of transition pedagogy while the favoured methodologies provide the opportunity to use the wide variety of data collection and analysis procedures that are necessary to understanding the complexity of student experience. And finally, that complexity is synthesised in the keywords.

### *What are the authors focussing on? A “coarse” qualitative analysis of the keywords*

*Note:* Space limitations restrict the detail that this topic could generate. Hence the “coarseness” of the analysis.

The 71 keywords identified in the nine issues of the Journal were used as a starting point to identify general themes. The original word list was reduced by using generic versions of similar concepts (e.g. elearning and online learning became elearning) and this synthesised list was sorted into clusters that had internal conceptual similarity. The clusters are listed in alphabetical order in Table 3.

### *Summarising the authors’ foci*

The clusters in Table 3 can be further synthesised by grouping them according to logic and/or theoretical/philosophical orientations. These reorganisations—some would call them “models”—could provide an insight into what the authors have been focussing on during 2010 to 2014 in the accepted manuscripts. One such “model” is shown in Figure 3. For brevity, the details

**Table 3: Alphabetical listing of keyword clusters**

<b>ASSESSMENT</b> assessment design formative feedback	<b>CURRICULUM</b> first year curriculum secondary curriculum third generation fourth generation Marzano Taxonomy curriculum scholars	<b>LEARNING</b> distance education indigenous education reflective learning service learning peer learning peer mentoring problem-based learning transformative learning scaffolded learning work integrated learning co-teaching student-centred learning inclusive teaching	<b>SOCIAL/CULTURAL INFLUENCES</b> social media inter-cultural communication cultural safety social inclusion
<b>STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS</b> academic literacy academic development literacy development learning styles psychological distress at-risk professional identity	<b>STUDENT GROUPINGS</b> low socio-economic NESB rural and regional First in Family mature-aged learners Maori and Pasifika non-traditional students	<b>TRANSITIONS</b> post-secondary transition	



of each cluster are not shown but can be inferred from the information in Table 3

The “model” is a series of concentric circles where the central focus is the student whose tertiary experience is influenced by learning, teaching, social and institutional-level activities. The significant keywords identified earlier—first year experience, transition and engagement—are readily obvious, albeit implied, in the model.

## Looking ahead - 2015 and beyond

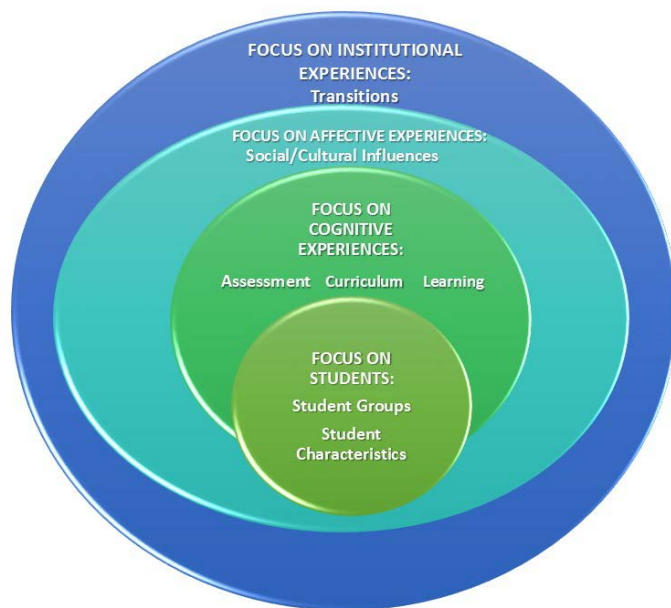
### *Open access publishing initiatives*

In line with the philosophy of open access publishing, the new Journal is exploring the following initiatives in 2015:

### *Ethical publishing*

From 2015, authors, who have had to complete a checklist when they submitted a manuscript to the *Int J FYHE*, will be asked to read the new Journal's Ethics and Malpractice Statement and acknowledge that their submission has not been previously published (including via a conference), nor is it before another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).

This statement aligns with the COPE Guidelines mentioned previously and is an attempt to bring specific attention to the consequences of plagiarism and concurrent submission to other journals.



**Figure 3:** Int J FYHE - Foci of content in accepted manuscripts



## Altmetrics

A new metric proposed as an alternative to personal citation methods and the widely used journal impact factor are currently being explored in conjunction with QUT Library staff. In scholarly and scientific publishing, Altmetrics are a new way of measuring the impact of a work, such as how many data and knowledge bases refer to it, article views, downloads, or mentions in social media and news media. Most recently, the Australian Open Access Support Group has provided a concise overview of the value of Altmetrics, particularly in the Open Access environment

<http://aoasg.org.au/altmetrics-and-open-access-a-measure-of-public-interest/>

## ORCID ID

ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) is a non-profit community-driven registry which provides researchers with a unique alpha-numeric identifier (an ORCID ID) plus a mechanism for linking research outputs to these identifiers.

A unique persistent identifier, such as the ID provided by ORCID, which researchers can associate with their name variations, enables researchers and research outputs to be linked accurately and reliably. Importantly, the ORCID ID *belongs to the researcher* rather than their current institution or a publisher. It will travel with the researcher when he or she moves to a new institution and aligns with the ethos surrounding the use of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

## STARS

2015 will see the launch of a new international conference known as STARS.

*Students* – who are they, what are their needs, what works for different cohorts, strategies for broader social inclusion and increasing participation in tertiary education, participation of first nation peoples

*Transitions* – pathways to tertiary education, transitions into (the first year experience) during (work integrated learning) and from tertiary education including graduate employability, and capstone experiences

*Achievement* – strategies promoting student achievement including curricular and co-curricular reform, employability, gamification and simulation enhanced learning

*Retention* – program, discipline, whole of institution, inter-institutional and sector collaborations designed to improve student retention, threshold skills and concepts

*Success* – student engagement, technology enhanced learning, understanding student expectations and realities, psychological wellbeing, application of learning analytics

This conference will provide the chance to disseminate and discuss current research, good practice, emerging initiatives and concepts that are aimed at improving students' tertiary learning experiences.

In its new form, the Journal will align themes to those of the student journey, in all its machinations, publishing scholarly papers, practice-based innovations and *Features*. And, of course, as it is currently, act as an adjunct to the STARS Conference assigning one issue to the best submissions. Additionally, we welcome ongoing suggestions for the improvement of the journal.

Full details of STARS Conference at <http://unistars.org/>

## Acknowledgements

Particular thanks to John Clarke for his comments and feedback on drafts of this feature, principally the analysis of the content.

The *Int JFYHE* has benefitted from the contributions of the Editorial Team and Advisory Board and also wishes to acknowledge the continued support and diligent work of over 90 national and international reviewers. As well, Queensland University of Technology Library staff have provided invaluable technical support and academic scholarly publishing advice and we extend thanks to Mark Gregson, Applications and Development Manager, eLibrary Services and Paula Callan, Scholarly Communications Librarian.



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